

Mark Hald

From: Clint Seward [cseward@verizon.net]
Sent: Thursday, January 01, 2009 5:29 PM
To: AVG
Cc: Board of Selectmen; Finance Committee; Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee; Steve Ledoux
Subject: ACTON VOTERS GROUP PETITIONS FOR 2009 ACTON TOWN WARRANT

Hi all,

Below is a series of six articles and resolutions presented by Acton Voters Group to the Acton Town Clerk for inclusion in the April Town Meeting Warrant. Their purpose is to open the discussion on several key items that, in our opinion, will improve the Acton budgeting process and Acton's fiscal management when adopted.

We suggest that you read the items and listen to the debate about them that will occur over the next three months. Then decide for yourself and come to April Town Meeting and vote.

If you want to help improve Acton and help move Acton forward through this difficult economic time, please read these items and get informed and vote.

Visit the ActonVotersGroup.com for more information. Or write to Acton Voters Group for any clarifications and with any questions. All debate will be made public on the website.

Clint Seward, Chair, ActonVotersGroup.com

cc: BOS, SC, FinCom, AVG Board

ACTON VOTERS GROUP PETITIONS
FOR
2009 ACTON TOWN WARRANT

Submitted to Acton Town Clerk on December 30, 2008

ARTICLE

To see if the Town will raise and appropriate, or appropriate from available funds, a sum of money for a Stabilization Fund for the Town, or take any other action thereto.

ARTICLE

To see if the Town will determine an amount of Free Cash and/or of the Recycling and Transfer Station Enterprise Fund which shall be used for the purpose of reducing the tax rate for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2009, or take any other action relative thereto.

Summary

It had been customary to provide the Annual Town Meeting with an opportunity to determine whether an amount of the Town's reserves should be used to reduce the tax rate. This petition requests that, pursuant to Article 3, Section 3-5 of the Charter of the Town of Acton, the Acton Board of Selectmen include this Article for the April 2009 Annual Town Meeting.

ARTICLE

To see if the Town will raise and appropriate, or appropriate from available funds, a sum of money to be expended by the Acton Finance Committee to support their activities for the fiscal year starting July 1, 2009, or take any other action relative thereto.

Summary

The Acton Finance Committee is the only major town board that has no staff support. Members of the Finance Committee must do their own research, keep the minutes of the meetings, and rely on the availability of municipal and school staff to provide information. These funds are intended to allow the Finance Committee, at its discretion, to pay for services such as secretarial help, membership fees in Finance Committee organizations, or any other purpose which would support their mandate of making recommendations to the Acton Town Meeting.

RESOLUTION

A Resolution of the Town of Acton related to the Adoption of a Reserve Policy

Whereas, the Town of Acton could increase transparency in the budgeting process;

Whereas, the Town has a history of conflicting and inconsistent use of its financial reserves;

Whereas, there is disagreement about the definition of "reserves;"

Whereas, depletion of reserves has led to two general overrides in the past six years;

Whereas, establishment of a Reserve Policy is recommended by Department of Revenue and is generally considered a sound financial planning tool;

Now, therefore it be resolved that:

The Acton Board of Selectmen and the Acton Finance Committee adopt a Reserve Policy.

RESOLUTION

A Resolution of the Town of Acton related to the appropriations for debt and interest

Whereas, the Town of Acton should increase transparency in the budgeting process;

Whereas, debt and interest costs, including those funded by debt exclusion overrides, have been included in municipal and school operating budgets;

Whereas, such debt and interest costs are determined at the time that the debt is incurred and are not part of yearly operations;

Whereas, such debt and interest costs generally decrease over time;

Whereas, inclusion of debt and interest in yearly operating budgets distorts the year-to-year operating budget comparisons:

Now, therefore be it resolved that:

All Municipal and Acton Public School debt and interest costs be presented as a separate Town Meeting Article.

RESOLUTION

A Resolution of the Town of Acton related to the presentation of new capital projects to the Acton Town Meeting

Whereas, the Town of Acton should increase transparency in the budgeting process;

Whereas, some new capital items have been funded within Municipal and School operating budgets without specific review by Town Meeting;

Whereas, Town Meeting should be allowed to decide whether to support any capital project;

Whereas, inclusion of capital items in yearly operating budgets distorts the year-to-year operating budget comparisons;

Whereas, the Town of Acton currently employs a "bottom line" budget which allows some projects to be funded that have not been approved by Town Meeting;

Now, therefore be it resolved that:

1. A capital project be defined as costing more than \$25,000 and having a useful life of more than five years, the cost shall be defined as total out-of-pocket cost regardless of whether the item is paid for in one fiscal year or financed over time.
2. Yearly operating budgets shall not include capital projects.